

Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Executive Secretariat

12 March 1986

NOTE FOR: DCI

Re videotape of BBC program on defectors:

Paragraph 4 of Tom Ryan's memo mentions a 3 March BBC "Panorama" program on defectors in which Geimer appeared.

I have given a copy of this tape to DCI Security should you wish to view it over the weekend (before your Tuesday afternoon meeting with Geimer.





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REMARKS


 Attached is article from British magazine by Tom Mangold, producer of the BBC program on defectors. It also mentions Bill Geimer. 
 has the tape of the TV program.

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Tom Mangold: The plight of Soviet defectors

When the Welcome to the USA mat is removed

A defector receives short semantic shrift in the dictionary—'deserter'; 'one who falls away from faith or duty'. Is this the justification for the offhand way in which, after giving valuable information, Soviet defectors are cut adrift by the CIA and left to find their own way in American society?

It was the noisy and deeply embarrassing re-defection to Moscow last year of top KGB Colonel Vitaly Yurchenko that focused attention on the plight of those who often risk their lives to flee Eastern Europe and go to the United States, taking an invaluable and primary source of knowledge with them. What these people carry in their skulls cannot be obtained by a one-time spy satellite picture or a platoon of pundits in the West. Yurchenko, it will be recalled, spent a short three months in the United States before walking out on his open-mouthed CIA escort in a rather downmarket French restaurant in Washington. The CIA had badly botched Yurchenko's attempt to revive an old love affair with a woman living in Canada. This so depressed the already lonely KGB officer that he walked out on America, but not before holding a much publicised press conference in which, in the very week of the super-powers' summit, he denounced America, the CIA and Mom's apple-pie. Then he flew home. A mortified CIA has taken the full blame for that fiasco.

Each year, about a hundred 'special-case' defectors are allowed permanent sanctuary in the United States in return for special services they have contributed to its government. The CIA handles the cases, their debriefing and their subsequent resettlement in the United States. But it is that third function which is giving all the trouble. The resettlement department, known as the 'Domestic Contacts' division, is not always staffed by the agency's highest flyers. It is one thing being in the glamorous 'operations' or 'analysis' departments, it is quite another wet-nursing a temperamental East European whose intelligence 'take' was never yours in the first place. One senator has unkindly but not inaccurately called the department 'a dead-end career assignment'. In its favour it must be admitted that resettling highly intelligent ex-diplomats, or KGB officers, or military men—all people without immediate transferable skills—is not easy. But the Yurchenko re-defection has been the last straw, and President Reagan himself has ordered a whole series of top-level investigations into the way the CIA handles its responsibilities to defectors once they have arrived in the United States. The smart money is already backing odds that the task may be transferred from the Langley claps to those nice boys down the road at the FBI. Meanwhile, so inept has much of the resettlement business been that a private-enterprise foundation—the Jamestown Foundation—has been formed to help do the job properly. The foundation's speciality is

tracking down those defectors with non-transferable skills, picking them off the floor of their lives, dusting them off and, with a little bit of hand-holding, pointing them in the right direction. The foundation believes these defectors' stories should be widely publicised; it does not, most definitely not, believe that defectors should allow their names to be changed before being given some crummy job in some anonymous Midwest town. I am indebted to Bill Geimer, the compassionate and hard-working director of the Jamestown Foundation for opening his files to me.



Dr Petre Nikolae. Who would believe that the former deputy director of the Romanian finance ministry is washing dirty underwear in the slums of Brooklyn? Well, he is. A handsome 55-year-old with bright eyes and an indomitable spirit, Dr Nikolae spent 18 years at the very heart of Comecon headquarters in Moscow, rising to a rank equivalent to that of a Soviet deputy minister. In 1981 he defected. After a prolonged debriefing he was shipped to New York, where no one at either the CIA or State Department took the slightest interest in him. He, still one of the world experts on the economies of the Soviet bloc, was soon subsisting on food stamps and welfare. The money the CIA gave him after his debriefing didn't last long, even though he slept in doss-houses and lived on junk food. The precious dollar reserve went on a handful of English lessons, but to this day he can barely string a sentence together. In some desperation, and badly advised, he went into 'business' and bought a laundrette in Brooklyn. Unable to obtain credit in the ordinary way because of his background, and unable to speak English properly, he fell into the hands of the moneylenders, borrowing close on the equivalent of £70,000 at loan-shark interest rates of 20 per cent. He had estimated that he could live on £200 a month, but the sums went

wrong, the machinery broke down and needed modernising; and the great economist took to the streets of Brooklyn, flogging ice-creams to stay alive. When the Jamestown Foundation discovered him he was working 15 hours a day with no time left to learn English. He was up to his neck in debt and sinking fast. The foundation has now helped him sell the laundrette and write a monograph revealing the politics of Comecon. Dr Nikolae says bravely that he sought America, America did not seek him. Nevertheless, he remains a shameful example of either mismanagement or non-management by those whose duty it is to offer systematic and sustained care to defectors.

Dr Vladimir Sakharov. Tall, handsome, rather spoiled, coming as he does from that Moscow privileged élite guaranteed the best of everything. He was soon flying high in the Soviet foreign ministry, and was working as an attaché in the Soviet embassy in Kuwait when he broke with Communism and his country. The local CIA man begged him to remain 'in place' as long as he could, before physically defecting, so Sakharov worked for them in the most dangerous way possible. But when at last he arrived in Washington his new CIA minders treated him like a dolt. They ordered him to change his name, and gave him the identity of a German; about as tactful to a Russian as giving Ian Paisley the identity of a Sinn Féiner. Then they shipped him out to the slums of Hollywood (It has them, too.) and dumped him in a motel where rooms were let by the hour for commer-

The CIA suggested that this talented bilingual former diplomat become a guide at Disneyland

cial sex and where 'you didn't want to look at the mattress'. Then they advised him to go on a motel management course.

His fellow 'students' on the course were two winos and a couple of former lobby-whores working their way up the management ladder. In fact, Sakharov was only being trained to be a sort of bell captain. Despite weekly visits by his CIA minders ('Everything OK, Vladimir?'), Dr Sakharov was going downhill fast. He had become a drunk and was living with a prostitute. When the motel management school went bankrupt, the CIA suggested Sakharov sold shoes or drive a taxi (he did both); later, it suggested this talented bilingual former diplomat become a guide at Disneyland, so he bought a canary-coloured suit and a funny flower tie—but failed to get the job.

One day, after seeing his reflection in a bar window in Hollywood ('I saw a fat, drunken jerk'), he began to pull himself together. He told the CIA he wanted his name back, he wanted help finding a respectable new career, and he wanted it now. The CIA threatened to axe his small annuity (Eventually it did.) and also warned him that he had better stay hidden as 16 KGB agents had recently landed at New

York's JFK airport with a contract to assassinate him. Sakharov called their bluff. (No Soviet defector is known to have been bumped off by the KGB in America, unless you want to include Trotsky.) Eventually, a sympathetic CIA handler helped him enter the University of Southern California, giving him a break that would change his life. With the help of the foundation he has now secured a teaching post at the University of Arizona. Through his own efforts he's now working America's profitable lecture circuit, making £3,500 per lecture. He's married and has a son who is a British soccer freak. Sakharov's future looks tolerable, but it was a near thing.



Andrei Soruken. A sensitive and intelligent 24-year-old student, with a lean, sculptured face that seems to absorb pain. Andrei was sent from Moscow to Tokyo to study at a language school. There he became trilingual, adding Japanese and English to his mother tongue. At this stage the KGB talent-spotters took an interest in the youngster, so Andrei promptly defected to the American embassy. On the flight to Los Angeles he was told, in all good faith, by his CIA escort that he would probably end up with a research post at an Ivy League university in the US. But the distance between promise and delivery was wider than the Pacific. On arrival in New York, Andrei was thoughtlessly placed in a cheap Broadway hotel surrounded by junkies and hookers. His none too generous allowance afforded him only a near-starvation diet. Offered neither work nor a retraining programme, he managed to cling only to the edges of the world's most ruthless city. He was mugged in Spanish Harlem, an experience that turned him into an unabashed racist. With the CIA now wholly disengaged, Andrei applied for a job as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant. 'But have you any experience?' they asked him in all seriousness. He worked there, and in a Japanese noodle store in New York. He was in a mess when the Jamestown Foundation discovered him, suffering badly from varicose veins from the all-day standing.

He was helped to apply for a post at Columbia University but, he claims, he ran into anti-Russian prejudice because of the way American home-grown Sovietologists jealously guard their patch against intrusion from the real thing. In truth, his youth and inexperience may not have been an asset. His academic brilliance, though, is beyond all doubt. The Jamestown Foundation has now moved him from the kitchens of New York to a decent flat in Washington and a grudging CIA has been arm-twisted into giving him some commercial translation work. But Andrei remains bitter and disillusioned, all too ready to return to Tokyo.



Aleksandr Ushakov. Professor Ushakov defected the hard way—he literally walked out of the Soviet Union, by climbing the formidable Caucasian mountains into Turkey. It was an epic 19-day escape that should have killed him several times over.

He had worked as associate professor at the Department of Philosophy at the Higher Maritime and Engineering Institute at Odessa until 1984. He joined a small group of students who met to debate the role of the KGB, the Party and the State and was betrayed by one of his best friends to the secret police, who arrested him. He was held a few days and then, classically, 'released', in the hope that he would lead the KGB to the other members of the student group. Ushakov's 'freedom' carried a four-car KGB tail, but he assumed, correctly, that weekends being weekends everyone wanted to get home to the wife and kids. Three of his four escorts did just that, the fourth he easily gave the slip. Then he headed south to Batumi, bought a few bits and pieces, and set off on the journey only one in every 100 succeeds in completing. He wore a cheap plastic compass on his wrist, tattered jeans, a thin anorak, a woolly hat and rather fashionable short white wellies—not much good for climbing the Caucasians but most comforting when it comes to cutting through electrified border fences.

He carried a few sachets of dried meat and soup, 90 pieces of black bread, some tea, some animal fat, half a bottle of brandy, some plastic bags and a kiddie's rubber ring. He wrapped his matches in party balloons to keep them dry, and he took some pepper to cope with the border guard dogs. God is not always on the side of the good, for it rained solidly for 18 out of the 19 days it took him to make the journey. The cold was so intense that his hands went black with frostbite. He swam stark naked across frozen streams, towing his clothes behind him in a plastic bag that floated on the rubber ring to keep them dry. He lashed himself to trees at night on the steeper mountainsides so as not to roll to his death during sleep. Hyperthermia, exhaustion and starvation were his constant companions. He survived the minefields and a Russian helicopter attack at the border, and only knew he was in Turkey when he picked up a matchbox with the word 'Istanbul' printed on it.

After his debriefing, the sublime became the ridiculous once more. The Domestic Contacts boys dumped him in the same old grubby New York hotel in which they had put Andrei and he stayed in the city, ignored and uncared for. But, unlike Andrei, Ushakov is a tough and resilient man. The foundation found and rescued him, took him to Washington and found him a board and lodgings in a posh house in

Potomac, where he works without income as a house guard. But Professor Ushakov is down to his last £100, has no income and, because during his eight-month-long debriefing he was given no opportunity to learn English, he, like Dr Nikolae, remains a stranger in a strange land. He has written a book in Russian about his remarkable escape, but it would cost him £5,000 just to have it translated into English to offer to a publisher. However, the man who dragged himself out of the USSR isn't going to give up. He's prepared to work as a taxi-driver; he's accepted the fact he'll never see his wife and children again; he does not expect anything from anyone, maintaining, cheerfully enough, that being broke in Potomac is better than doing a ten-year stretch in Siberia. Nevertheless, his is not the kind of story that would induce similar men to take similar risks. The former director of the Defence Intelligence Agency, who takes an interest in the work of the foundation, is convinced that Ushakov's detailed knowledge of a whole range of subjects connected with recruitment into the Soviet merchant and naval fleets will take years of careful debriefing. He is baffled and angry that no one seems to have arranged to maintain professional contact with, let alone help Ushakov start a new life. Defectors give all they have, as quickly as they can and ask little in return. That seems no excuse for giving them nothing.

But the Yurchenko re-defection, and the quiet and necessary work of the Jamestown Foundation, are at last producing some positive results. There are now moves to create a sort of 'defectors' charter' which will entitle those who qualify to more than a quick debriefing, a couple of quid to be getting on with and a pat on the back. The days when the CIA, in secret, and for its own eccentric reasons, gives or denies a defector a decent pension, or retraining programme, or new career, may soon be over. The 'charter' would guarantee a decent annuity, citizenship granted more quickly, language training and a custom-made retraining programme for those who cannot transfer their skills from East to West. It may indeed be difficult to find a new role for a defecting Soviet pilot or diplomat, but it should not be impossible. Once Washington tries a little harder, the dignity and self-respect—the most precious acquisition for any defector—will follow automatically.

Tqm Mangold reported and Lorraine Heggessey produced 'Defectors' for 'Panorama' (BBC1).